

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



January 29, 1991

ALL-COUNTY LETTER NO. 91-07

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL COUNTY GAIN COORDINATORS

SUBJECT: PROGRESS DETERMINATION GUIDELINES FOR GREATER AVENUES
FOR INDEPENDENCE (GAIN) EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

REFERENCE: ALL-COUNTY LETTERS 86-82 and 87-57

This letter is to inform you about new guidelines for the monitoring of student progress in order to determine whether participants are Making Satisfactory Progress (MSP) in GAIN educational activities. The enclosed guidelines contain specific information regarding progress monitoring and exit certification. These guidelines supplement those described in All-County Letters 86-82 and 87-57.

Background

The Family Support Act of 1988, Public Law 100-485, requires that States define and specify standards for MSP for Job Opportunities and Basic Skills Training (JOBS) participants. They are to be used to determine whether participants are progressing satisfactorily in their assigned activities, and the appropriateness of their program services. Progress standards are now federally required for JOBS education participants, while training program standards are not federally required until October 1, 1992.

However, requirements for MSP for both education and training are now contained in Welfare and Institutions Code 11328.6 and Manual of Policies and Procedures (MPP) Section 42-740.14. Participants in GAIN educational activities are subject to these requirements effective October 1, 1990. County Welfare Departments (CWDs) need to inform their educational providers of these requirements, amend provider contracts/agreements accordingly, and make arrangements to monitor participant progress in accordance with State Department of Social Services (SDSS) guidelines. The SDSS has been working with the California Department of Education (CDE) and the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges (COCCC) to also advise adult education providers and community colleges of these new requirements.

These requirements apply to everyone in existing Adult Basic Education (ABE), English-as-a-Second Language (ESL), General Educational Development (GED) and high school participant contracts. No new participant contract has to be signed for this purpose. Depending on local circumstances, Counties may use "excess cost" funding for monitoring, tracking, and reporting attendance and progress of participants. Counties should give priority to amending education contracts first because of the Federal requirements.

Progress standards for training activities as defined in MPP 42-730.3 will need to reflect JOBS requirements as soon as administratively possible prior to October 1, 1992. The CWDs will need to work with these providers to ensure that appropriate methods are developed for measuring progress in these training activities.

There are minimum criteria which apply to determination standards for all GAIN educational activities. These standards shall:

- 1) Include both qualitative (e.g., competency attainment or grade point average) and quantitative (e.g., reasonable length of time) measures;
- 2) Include measures that are applied at least once a year, and;
- 3) Be communicated to a participant by either the provider or the CWD when s/he begins an educational activity.

It is important to note that for pre-assessment educational activities, i.e., ABE, GED, ESL, and high school, participants shall be considered to be meeting the academic progress requirements, regardless of progress test score results, unless determined otherwise at a progress evaluation. Specific guidelines for the use of this evaluation are provided in MPP Sections 42-772.511 and .512.

Guidelines for Educational Activity Progress Determination

The SDSS has contracted with the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) to determine the most effective method for integrating the educational progress requirements within the existing GAIN framework. The CASAS system is approved as a validated exemplary program by the United States Department of Education, and is currently being used in its National Evaluation of Adult Education programs as well as all federally funded ABE programs in California. The purpose of the national evaluation is to assess ABE and ESL student progress determination methods on a nationwide scale.

It has been determined that statewide criteria for measuring satisfactory progress in components providing ABE and ESL instruction are necessary. The SDSS has contracted with CASAS to develop instruments for measuring progress and certifying attainment of the educational competencies. These instruments have been field tested within GAIN during the past year and will be provided by SDSS to fulfill these requirements. Use of these instruments is mandatory unless use of alternative equivalent instruments has prior SDSS approval.

Enclosed are the State-developed guidelines for determining satisfactory progress and exit certification in ABE and ESL instruction.

Counties shall use existing provider-developed criteria and progress measurement tools in other education components as follows:

General Educational Development (GED) Instruction

Progress determination will be based upon progress monitoring agreed to by the CWD and the provider. This monitoring must be consistent with the general MSP standard criteria specified above. As with other pre-assessment activities, a participant shall be considered to be making satisfactory progress unless the results of a progress evaluation indicate otherwise. The formal determination that a participant is not making satisfactory progress shall only occur as part of a progress evaluation.

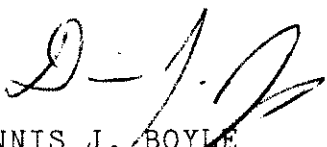
Some individuals referred for a GED initially receive ABE instruction to bring them from a CASAS 215 to a level where they are ready for GED instruction (approximately a CASAS 225). Although some providers refer to this as "pre-GED" or "Advanced ABE" instruction, these individuals are considered enrolled in a GED program and subject to provider-developed standards of progress. The CASAS system has developed tests to measure the progress of persons in "pre-GED" or "Advanced ABE" instruction. The use of these tests is not mandated but can be made available to interested providers. (See Enclosure II for more information.)

Exit certification shall occur when participants pass the GED at the level specified by the CDE to receive a GED certificate, or complete requirements for a high school diploma.

Other Educational Programs

Progress determination will be based upon progress monitoring and exit certification procedures agreed to by the CWD and the provider. The progress determination method must be consistent with the general MSP standard criteria specified above.

If you have any questions concerning this letter, please contact your GAIN and Employment Services Operations Analyst at (916) 324-6962.



DENNIS J. BOYLE
Deputy Director

cc: CWDA

Enclosures

GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING PROGRESS AND EXIT CERTIFICATION IN ABE AND ESL INSTRUCTION

Listed below are methods by which CWDs and GAIN Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) education providers are to monitor progress and determine if participants are making satisfactory progress (MSP). Each method identifies the frequency for monitoring progress, and establishes standards for satisfactory progress and exit certification. The appropriate CASAS instruments are discussed. Also included are the procedures for using provider-developed methods for determining progress and exit certification as alternatives to the CASAS instruments.

In order to be consistent with Assembly Bill (AB) 3 (matriculation) requirements, community colleges must have methods that include multiple measures. Methods must include (1) the CASAS progress/exit certification tests or equivalents and (2) instructor evaluation or an alternate assessment measure. Instructor evaluation may include but is not limited to observation of competency attainment related to employability, quality of work completed in class, and grades on work in progress. (This approach may also be used by providers other than community colleges if formally agreed upon by the provider and the CWD.)

SDSS-Developed Progress Determination Methods

Individuals receiving ABE or ESL instruction are to have their progress assessed using CASAS Survey Achievement Tests at a minimum of once every three months of regularly attended instruction, or once every term as long as it is less than four months in duration. Also, a version of the test is administered when the participant begins the education component. Participants may be tested more often if determined appropriate by the educational provider or CWD. Progress test procedures for ABE include assessment of reading comprehension and math computation/problem solving. For ESL participants, progress test procedures include assessment of reading, listening comprehension and oral proficiency. These tests assess a student's ability to apply basic skills to employment or training-related situations. They are pencil and paper instruments and can be either group or individually administered.

These test results are to be used to assess progress, including possible referral to a progress evaluation, and readiness to take the exit certification test. The results of the standardized progress testing and the instructor's evaluation of the person's progress on course work shall be used to determine when an exit

certification test should be given. The exit certification testing is designed to exit GAIN students from an ABE or ESL component at a CASAS 215 level based on standard criteria in an employability context. Upon passing the appropriate CASAS 215 level certification test, participants proceed to their next appropriate GAIN activity.

The ABE Basic Skills Certification Test is a multiple choice test and includes reading and mathematics portions. The ESL Certification Test consists of a multiple choice test with a short individual interview, and includes listening, reading, and an interview (oral assessment) portions.

Whenever a participant completes a respective three-month period or term which lasts less than four months without meeting the progress standard, as determined by any agreed upon progress indicator, his or her progress shall be evaluated. The purpose of the evaluation will be to determine why the participant has not progressed, and whether s/he can be expected to progress if left with the provider or in the component. The instructor's systematic and documented assessment of the person's progress in course work, when available, will also be used in the progress evaluation. The evaluation shall serve to identify learning barriers and explore intervention strategies to address these barriers. Diagnostic testing to obtain information on possible learning difficulties may be necessary in this process.

Listed below are the specific elements of the ABE and ESL progress criteria:

ABE Instruction

Progress Testing - CASAS Survey Achievement Tests for math and reading. Either the Level A (Forms 11 and 12) or Level B (Forms 13 and 14) are used, depending on appraisal scores and length of time in the activity.

- Appraisal score of 214 or below in either math or reading: Five points for every three months of regularly attended instruction.
- Appraisal scores of 214 and below in both math and reading: Combined total of 5 points for both scores for every three months of regularly attended instruction.

Exit Certification - Score of at least 215 on the CASAS GAIN Basic Skills Certification Test, which is multiple choice and includes reading and mathematics portions.

ESL Instruction

Progress Testing - CASAS Survey Achievement Tests for reading and listening. Either the reading Level A (Forms 11 and 12) or Level B (Forms 13 and 14) and listening tests (Forms 51, 52, and 63 through 66) are used, depending on appraisal scores and length of time in the activity.

- Appraisal score of less than 200 on the GAIN Appraisal Listening Test, or unable to be tested due to very limited English comprehension skills: Five points for every three months of regularly attended instruction, to be tested only with listening tests until the participant progresses beyond the 200 level.
- Appraisal score of 200 through 214: Combined total of 5 points for both reading and listening tests for every three months of regularly attended instruction.

Exit Certification - A score of at least 215 on the CASAS GAIN ESL Certification Test, which consists of a multiple choice test in reading and listening and a short individual interview testing oral proficiency.

Provider-Developed Methods for Determining Progress and Exit Certification

GAIN ABE and ESL education providers may submit their own progress determination method(s) for determining the need for a progress evaluation and exit certification, if determined appropriate between a provider and respective CWD. Those criteria and procedures should be consistent with classroom curriculum content, and assess progress at a minimum of once every three months of regularly attended instruction or once every term as long as it is less than four months in duration. Interested providers must demonstrate how their method measures the competency outcomes required for all GAIN participants.

Provider-developed progress testing and exit certification must: (1) include assessment of reading comprehension and mathematics skills for ABE; (2) include assessment of reading and listening comprehension for ESL; and (3) be limited to specific competencies related to employment. (See Attachments I and II.)

Authorization to utilize an alternate progress determination method is subject to the review/approval of SDSS. Requests to utilize this option must be submitted by CWDs to SDSS in order to receive consideration. Approval will be based upon the Criteria for Alternative Testing Instruments contained in Attachments I and II. Providers may continue to use existing alternate progress determination methods pending State approval, but may

not implement new methods without State approval. Counties may submit requests only after they have received training. (See Technical Assistance below.)

Test Administration

Progress and exit certification testing required as part of a progress determination method may be administered by either CWD or educational service provider staff as determined appropriate by the CWD. Testing materials developed for GAIN under contract with SDSS will be provided by CASAS to responsible CWDs/providers after completion of the requisite training noted below. There are no costs associated with obtaining CASAS testing materials to those agencies conducting the testing. Contact persons responsible for receiving supplies and for test security will need to be designated by each CWD or provider receiving these materials.

Technical Assistance

Regional workshops will be held by CASAS in January 1991 through May 1991 to familiarize CWD and educational provider staff with (1) expected outcomes for ABE and ESL instruction, (2) procedures for obtaining approval on provider-developed tests, and (3) the CASAS-developed progress and exit certification testing instruments. Training on a learning difficulties screening instrument recently developed by CASAS will also be included in these workshops.

Information on the dates and locations of these workshops will be provided to CWDs under separate cover by staff from CASAS. County and provider staff will not be permitted to administer test materials until after they have received the required training. The CWDs will need to forward this information to educational providers in order to ensure their participation in these workshops. Ongoing technical assistance regarding these testing procedures will be available from CASAS.

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Monitoring Student Progress and Exit Certification In ABE: Criteria for Alternative Testing Instruments

GAIN education service providers for ABE students who choose to develop or use alternative testing instruments to formally monitor students' satisfactory progress must follow the guidelines described below.

ABE Progress Monitoring

Modalities: For ABE students, progress test procedures must include assessment of reading comprehension and math computation/problem solving.

Tests should have alternate forms, matched by content and level of difficulty of the items so that they can be used as progress tests, i.e., a pre-test and post-test. The system must include a version of the test which is administered when the participant begins the educational component. The test should be designed to further assess the participant's level of functioning and knowledge at entry. After three months of regularly attended instruction, or once every term as long as it is less than four months in duration, a corresponding test is given to assess the impact of instructional interventions.

Contents/ Outcome

Test content must address specific competencies related to employability. Students must be able to demonstrate basic skills in an employability-related context by performing related activities. Competencies which should be covered during instruction and at various levels of progress testing should be included. The competencies should be similar to those measured by the certification testing instrument.

Samples of ABE Competencies:

<u>TASK</u>	<u>SKILL</u>
Filling out a job application	Reading comprehension & writing skills
Interpreting wages, wage deductions and benefits	Mathematics computation
Demonstrate use of savings and checking accounts	Reading comprehension, mathematics computation & writing skills
Reading workplace safety rules	Reading comprehension
Use weights, measures, scales and money	Reading comprehension & mathematics computation

	<u>TASK</u>	<u>SKILL</u>
	Identify appropriate medical care and fill out medical & dental forms	Reading comprehension, math computation & writing
Level:	Tests must be available at a range of instructional levels, from pre-literate through intermediate levels, and administered based on their appropriate level of instruction. See behavioral descriptors below of ABE student levels.	
Conditions:	The monitoring progress procedure must be reliably and consistently administered to assure that all students are presented the assessment in a systematic manner, giving each individual an equal opportunity. All assessment instruments must minimize or eliminate cultural or linguistic bias, have been normed on a population similar to GAIN participants, must demonstrate mastery of specific employment objectives at an intermediate level of reading and math skills, and must be consistent with the education and psychological testing standards of the American Educational Research Institution, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education.*	

ABE Exit Certification

GAIN Adult Basic Education service providers who choose to develop criteria and assessment procedures and instruments for exiting **GAIN ABE** participants must follow the guidelines described below.

Modalities: Certification procedures must include assessment of reading comprehension and math computation/problem solving.

Content/

Outcome: Test content must address specific competencies related to employment. Students must be able to demonstrate the mastery of employability-related competencies by performing related activities, such as:

<u>TASK</u>	<u>SKILL</u>
Filling out a job application	Reading comprehension & writing skills
Interpreting wages, wage deductions and benefits	Mathematics computation

* Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education. (1986)

<u>TASK</u>	<u>SKILL</u>
Demonstrate use of savings and checking accounts	Reading comprehension, mathematics computation & writing skills
Reading workplace safety rules	Reading comprehension
Level:	Students should demonstrate proficiency at a high intermediate level of ABE , a CASAS 215 or the equivalent. See information below for behavioral descriptors of this level. Standard passing scores on provider-developed tests must be initially verified by administering GAIN Basic Skills Certification Test and comparing passing scores to provider passing scores.
Conditions:	The certification procedure must be reliably and consistently administered to assure that all students are presented the assessment in a systematic manner, giving each individual an equal opportunity. All assessment instruments must minimize or eliminate cultural or linguistic bias, have been normed on a population similar to GAIN participants, must demonstrate mastery of specific employment objectives at an intermediate level of reading and math skills, and must be consistent with the education and psychological testing standards of the American Educational Research Institution, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education.*

Behavioral Descriptors of ABE Student Levels

Basic skill functional levels have been identified based on eight years of statewide achievement data for students enrolled in Basic Education programs in California. The following descriptions of the levels assist in the description of Adult Basic Education students and are correlated with CASAS test scores and the interpretation of the test results.

Beginning ABE/A Level. Participants at this level have difficulty with basic literacy and computational skills necessary to function in employment and in the community. These participants have difficulty providing basic personal identification in written form (e.g., job applications), are not able to compute wages and deductions on paychecks, and cannot follow simple basic written directions and safety procedures. (**CASAS Scale Score of below 200**)

Intermediate ABE/B level. Participants at the intermediate level have low literacy skills and have difficulty pursuing other than entry level programs requiring minimal literacy skills. They can fill out simple forms and demonstrate some basic computation. (**CASAS Scale Score of 200 - 214**)

* Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education. (1986)

**Monitoring Student Progress and Exit Certification
In ESL: Criteria for Alternative Testing Instruments**

GAIN education service providers for **ESL** students who choose to develop or use alternative testing instruments to formally monitor students' satisfactory progress must follow the guidelines described below.

ESL Progress Monitoring

Modalities: For **ESL** students, progress test procedures must include assessment of listening and reading comprehension.

Tests should have alternate forms, matched by content and level of difficulty of the items so that they can be used as progress tests, i.e., a pre-test and post-test. The system must include a version of the test which is administered when the participant begins the educational component. The test should be designed to further assess the participant's level of functioning and knowledge at entry. After three months of regularly attended instruction, or once every term as long as it is less than four months in duration, a corresponding test is given to assess the impact of instructional interventions.

**Contents/
Outcome**

Test content must address specific competencies related to employability. Students must be able to demonstrate basic skills in an employability-related context by performing related activities. Competencies which should be covered during instruction and at various levels of progress testing should be included. The competencies should be similar to those measured by the certification testing instrument.

Samples of ESL Competencies:

<u>TASK</u>	<u>SKILL</u>
Filling out a job application	Reading comprehension & writing skills
Demonstrate use of savings and checking accounts	Reading comprehension & writing skills
Using a telephone to set up a job interview	Listening comprehension & oral proficiency
Following directions related to specific employment task	Listening comprehension
Reading workplace safety rules	Reading comprehension
Use weights, measures, scales, and money	Reading comprehension

<u>TASK</u>	<u>SKILL</u>
Identify appropriate medical care and fill out medical & dental forms	Reading comprehension, listening & writing skills

Level: Tests must be available at a range of instructional levels, from pre-literate through intermediate levels, and administered based on their appropriate level of instruction. See descriptions below of student functional levels for **ESL**.

Conditions: The monitoring progress procedure must be reliably and consistently administered to assure that all students are presented the assessment in a systematic manner, giving each individual an equal opportunity. All assessment instruments must minimize or eliminate cultural or linguistic bias, have been normed on a population similar to **GAIN** participants, must demonstrate mastery of specific employment objectives at an intermediate level of English, and must be consistent with the education and psychological testing standards of the American Educational Research Institution, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education.*

ESL Exit Certification

GAIN ESL education service providers and other agencies who choose to develop criteria and assessment procedures and instruments for exiting **GAIN ESL** participants must follow the guidelines described below.

Modalities: Certification procedures must include assessment of reading and listening comprehension.

Content/

Outcome: Test content must address specific competencies related to employment. Students must be able to demonstrate the mastery of employability-related competencies by performing related activities, such as:

<u>TASK</u>	<u>SKILL</u>
Filling out a job application	Reading comprehension & writing skills
Using a telephone to set up a job interview	Listening comprehension & oral proficiency

* Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education. (1986)

<u>TASK</u>	<u>SKILL</u>
Following directions related to specific employment task	Listening comprehension
Reading workplace safety rules	Reading comprehension
Level:	Students should demonstrate proficiency at a high intermediate level of ESL , a CASAS 215 or the equivalent. See descriptions below of student functional levels for ESL .
Conditions:	The certification procedures must be reliably and consistently administered to assure that all students are presented the assessment in a systematic manner, giving each individual an equal opportunity. All assessment instruments must minimize or eliminate cultural or linguistic bias, have been normed on a population similar to GAIN participants, must demonstrate mastery of specific employment objectives at an intermediate level of English, and must be consistent with the education and psychological testing standards of the American Educational Research Institution, the American Psychological Association, and the National Council on Measurement in Education.*

Behavioral Descriptors of ESL Student Levels**

ESL Pre-Literate Orientation. Functions minimally if at all in English. Minimal, if any, ability to read. Can state previous occupation(s) and current job status in simple terms. Can ask simple clarification questions about job tasks and instructions. Can respond to simple direct questions about work progress. Can ask for help. Can sign name. Can respond to simple oral warnings. Can read common warning or safety signs. (**CASAS Scale Score of 165 - 180/A**)

ESL Beginning. Functions in a very limited way in situations related to immediate needs. Can interpret simplified forms that include name, address, telephone number and dates. Can read very simple signs. Can follow simple oral instructions to begin and to perform a demonstrated task. (**CASAS Scale Score of 181 - 190/A**)

* Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing. American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education. (1986)

** Adapted from the MELT (Mainstream English Language Training) Project.

ESL Beginning. Functions with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs. Can read at low level with assistance. Can respond to questions about previous work experience including occupation length, and dates of employment. Can fill out simple job application form. Can inquire about job openings. Can follow simple oral instructions. **(CASAS Scale Score of 191 - 200/A)**

ESL Intermediate. Can satisfy basic survival needs and a very few routine social demands. Can read want ads and identify skills needed for a job. Can describe previous work experience, job skills, qualifications, and training. Can read signs and notices advertising available positions. Can answer basic questions about educational background. Can give and follow simple directions and report specific problems encountered in completing a job task. **(CASAS Scale Score of 201 - 208/B)**

ESL Intermediate. Can satisfy basic survival needs and some limited social demands. Can begin and end interview appropriately and ask and answer questions appropriately. Can respond to multiple-step oral instructions. **(CASAS Scale Score of 209 - 215/B)**

**Optional CASAS Tests For
Measuring Progress in "Pre-GED" or
"Advanced ABE" Instruction**

Listed below are the specific elements of the optional "pre-GED" or "Advanced ABE" progress criteria:

Progress Testing - CASAS Survey Achievement Test, Level C
(Forms 15 and 16)

- Appraisal scores of 215 through 224 on both reading and math and lacking a high school diploma: Combined total of five points for both reading and math scores for every three months of regularly attended instruction.

Exit Certification - Score of at least 225 on both reading and math CASAS Survey Achievement Tests.

Behavioral descriptors for ABE students at this instructional level, are listed below:

Pre-GED/Advanced ABE/C Level. Participants at the advanced level are functioning above a basic literacy level, and are able to handle most survival needs and many social skills. They have difficulty following more complex sets of directions and are functioning below a high school level. Students at the advanced level of **ABE** may also be designated pre-GED. (**CASAS Scale Score of 215 - 225**)